

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

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U.S. agency discloses secrecy leaks

WASHINGTON [UPI]—Disclosure of the secret "Pentagon Papers" on the Viet Nam war stunned the White House in 1971, prompted the so-called plumbers operation which involved burglaries and wiretaps, and caused Richard Nixon to revise procedures for keeping and declassifying secrets.

Tuesday the White House's watchdog on these matters, the Interagency Classification Review Committee, acknowledged that last year 17 unauthorized disclosures of secret information occurred, with the executive branch failing to identify the "leaker."

"There were 17 instances of unauthorized disclosure reported to the ICRC in 1975," according to the agency's 63-page quarterly report released through the White House.

"In the vast majority of cases . . . the disclosures have been the result of articles which have appeared in the press or in professional journals.

"INVESTIGATIONS of such disclosures have failed to identify the source of the release," the report said. Discussing continuing government leaks—none to

compare with the sensation of the Pentagon Papers--the Interagency panel said it was "encouraged by the relatively small number of unauthorized disclosures," and says it proves the nation's secrets are being protected.

The Review Committee produced statistics and charts to demonstrate how executive order 11652 of March, 1972, has liberated thousands of government pages from the obscurity of secrecy.

In 1973, 4,086,319 documents were classified. In 1975 this figure had fallen to 3,794,455.

Before the executive order 59,316 federal employees were authorized to consign information to confidential, secret, or top secret status. In 1975, the equivalent figure had fallen to 14,729.

THE DEFENSE Department was singled out for special praise because it reduced the number of Pentagon classifiers from 30,542 to 4,955, a reduction of 84 per cent.

"The ICRC believes it can be justifiably proud of its accomplishments to date and of the progressive actions taken by the departments to effectively implement the order," the review panel said.

"Thus in 1975," it said, "a more solid foundation was constructed for the difficult task before the committee of striking that delicate balance between an informed citizenry and protection of official information in the interests of national security."